U.S. Department of the Interior Bureau of Land Management

Categorical Exclusion

Pistol Draw Remote Automated Weather Station (RAWS)

November 2015

PREPARING OFFICE

U.S. Department of the Interior Bureau of Land Management Worland Field Office



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Chapter 1. Pistol Draw Remote Automated Weather Station (RAWS)

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DOI-BLM-WY-R010-2015-0050-CX

1.1. Background

The Remote Automated Weather Station (RAWS) network operates as a formal interagency collaboration with ownership widely distributed among federal and state partners. Most of the stations owned by the wildland fire agencies are placed in locations where they can monitor fire danger. RAWS units collect, store, and forward data to a computer system at the National Interagency Fire Center (NIFC) in Boise, Idaho, via the Geostationary Operational Environmental Satellite (GOES). The GOES is operated by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). The data is automatically forwarded to several other computer systems including the Weather Information Management System (WIMS) and the Western Regional Climate Center (WRCC) in Reno, Nevada. The BLM WY Worland Field Office (WFO) has three RAWS in its borders—Grass Creek at 7127 ft, Split Rock Creek at 6554 ft, and Hyatt High at 5670 ft. Each of these stations is located in a zone that, on average, receives 10 to 19 inches of precipitation per year. There are no stations that collect and record precipitation and weather data in the 9 inch or less precipitation zone where 456,362 acres of Wyoming big sagebrush is known to be the majority component of the vegetative community.

BLM Office: Worland

Proposed Action Title/Type: Placement of a permanent RAWS (Remote Automated Weather Station)

Location of Proposed Action: The RAWS installation site is at N 43.848778 X W -107.922667 (WGS84) located in T45N R92W S20 within the Faure Nowater allotment on BLM managed land. The site is approximately 13 miles ENE of Kirby, WY and 12 miles SE of Worland, WY. It can be accessed 0.67 miles S of the junction of Neiber and Potter Roads then 0.10 mile due E off Potter Road.

Description of Proposed Action: A permanent, stationary Remote Automated Weather Station (RAWS) will be installed in T45N R92W S20 to provide precipitation and weather data. The weather data collected at the station will be remotely sensed via satellite, available for real-time access via the Internet at MesoWest (http://raws.wrh.noaa.gov) and stored in perpetuity. The weather data will be used for: predicting or estimating components of wildland fire severity and behavior, prescribed fire planning and behavior, and strategic seasonal and multi-year resource allocations; investigations to supply evidence of weather at the times of unauthorized-fires; assessment of weather impacts to wildlife and vegetation changes and response to treatments; and sharing with local fire cooperators (i.e., Washakie and Hot Springs County Fire Districts), the public, and entities and institutions that do climatological analyses and weather research.

Installation of a RAWS TriLeg tower on 10FT X 10FT ground area, with a 20 FT aerial mast, surrounded by an exclosure fence 16FT X 16FT of buck and pole materials. The tower provides a solid frame to mount sensors and other equipment. The feet can be anchored with rocks piled on top of the feet or with metal stakes. Anchored to the ground, it is able to withstand sustained 125 mph (201 km/h) winds without requiring setting in a concrete base. The completed RAWS would look the same as those found at Grass Creek, Hyatt High, and Split Rock Creek as shown in the picture below.



Land Use Plan Conformance

This plan has been reviewed to determine if the proposed action conforms to the land use plan as required by 43 CFR 1610.5. The proposed action conforms to the Record of Decision and Approved Resource Management Plan for the Worland Field Office, dated September 21, 2015. The decisions in the Worland Resource Management Plan (WRMP) provide general management direction and allocation of uses and resources on the public lands in the area.

Land Use Plan Name: Record of Decision and Approved Resource Management Plan for the Worland Field Office

Date Approved/Amended: September 21, 2015

WRMP/ROD record numbers:

3003, Base the response to wildfires consistent with objectives and the cost/benefits of the resources at risk. For Wildland Fire Management, the protection of human life is the single, overriding priority. Setting priorities among protecting human communities and community infrastructure, other property, and improvements, and natural and cultural resources will be done on the values to be protected, human health and safety, and the costs of protection.

3007, Maintain and implement FMP consistent with this RMP to address fire management on a landscape scale. Under the appropriate environmental conditions the use of unplanned ignitions for resource benefit and prescribed fire to meet resource management objective is allowed in the entire planning area.

3008, Suppress fires threatening Greater Sage-Grouse habitats and crucial winter wildlife habitat within Wyoming big sagebrush communities. Where fire would be utilized to meet resource

Chapter 1 Pistol Draw Remote Automated Weather Station (RAWS)

Background

objectives, work closely with resource specialists to protect and improve Greater Sage-Grouse habitat.

3010, Cooperate with other agencies and landowners to conduct landscape treatments resulting in enhanced fuels management and/or restoration of fire adapted ecosystems.

3013, Reduce fuels in the wildland urban interface.

3014, Response to wildfire may vary from full suppression in areas where fire is undesirable, to monitoring fire behavior in areas where fire can be used as a management tool.

3015, Utilize wildland fires (wildfires managed for resource benefit and prescribed fires) and other vegetation treatments to restore fire-adapted ecosystems, reduce hazardous fuels, and accomplish resource management objectives.

1.2. Compliance with NEPA:

The Proposed Action is categorically excluded from further documentation under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) in accordance with 43 CFR 46.210 (e) Nondestructive data collection, inventory (including field, aerial, and satellite surveying and mapping), study, research, and monitoring activities.

I considered placement of the RAWS based on weather and precipitation data and for this portion of the WFO it is a tool that will benefit fire fighter and public safety, assessment and monitoring of Wyoming big sagebrush communities and Wyoming big sagebrush obligate wildlife habitat, livestock grazing opportunities, and data sharing with cooperating agencies and organizations.

1.3. Approval and Contact Information

/s/ Michael Phillips	November 16, 2015
Worland Field Office Manager	Date

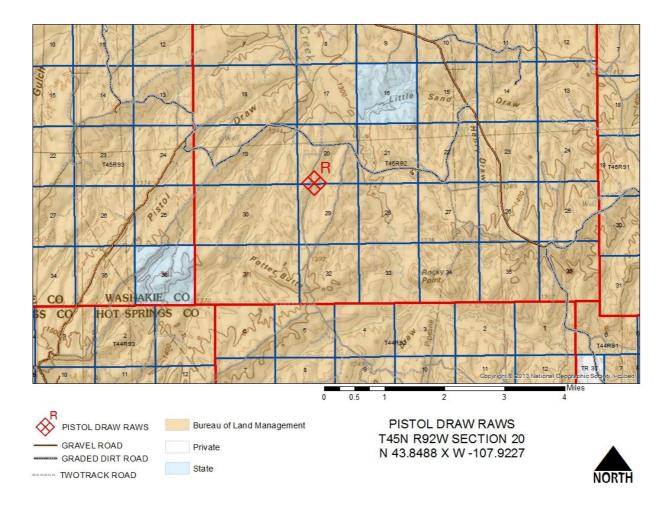
Contact Person

For additional information concerning this CX review, contact Dr. Yvonne Warren, NRS at 307-347-5100.

Attachments:

Extraordinary Circumstances Review

Map



Appendix A. Extraordinary Circumstance Review

Extr	Extraordinary Circumstances			
Would the proposed project				
	1. Have significant impacts on public health or safety?			
Yes		Resource	Rationale	
	X	Wastes (Solid or Hazardous)	The proposed action would not create wastes (either solid or hazardous).	
	X	Public Health or Safety	The proposed action would not pose a public health or safety risk.	
			ral resources and unique geographic characteristics as historic or cultural	
			s; wilderness areas; wild or scenic rivers; national natural landmarks; sole	
			ne farmlands; wetlands (Executive Order 11990); floodplains (Executive	
			atory birds; and other ecologically significant or critical areas?	
Yes		Resource	Rationale	
	X	Sole or principal drinking	None present	
	X	water aquifers Prime farmlands	None present in WEO	
	X	Wetlands	None present in WFO None present	
	X	Floodplains	None present	
	X	National monuments	None present in WFO	
	X	Migratory birds	No measureable impacts to migratory birds are anticipated	
	X	National Natural landmarks	None present in WFO	
	X	Wild/Scenic Rivers	None present	
	X	Wilderness Areas	None present	
	X	Park/recreation/refuge lands	None present	
	X		No historic properties are located within the project area.	
	X	Other ecologically significant		
		or critical areas (Wild	The Bird of process	
		Horses/HMA, LWCs, etc.)		
3. H	ave h	ighly controversial environmen	tal effects or involve unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses	
		le resources [NEPA section 102		
Yes		Resource	Rationale	
	X	Vegetation	No controversial effects concerning vegetation	
	X	Soils	No effects concerning soils resources soils	
	X	Hydrology	No controversial effects concerning hydrology	
	X	Recreation	No controversial issues with recreation resources	
	X	Visual Resources	Class IV VRM, no issue	
	X	Wildlife	No controversial effects concerning wildlife resources	
	X	Lands/Access	No controversial effects are anticipated concerning lands	
4 77	X	Travel Management	No controversial issues with travel management.	
			significant environmental effects or involve unique or unknown	
			Dationala	
168				
	Λ	vegetation		
	X	Soils		
	2.1			
	X	Recreation		
	X		No adverse effects to VRM Class IV resources	
	No X X X X	righly uncertain and potentially ental risks? Resource Vegetation Soils Hydrology Recreation Visual Resources	Rationale No uncertain or unique environmental effects are associated with the proposed action. No effects concerning soils resources No uncertain or unique environmental effects are associated with the proposed action. No adverse effects to recreation resources No adverse effects to VRM Class IV resources	

		inary Circumstances	
Wou		e proposed project	
	X	Wildlife	The proposed project is within sage-grouse Priority Habitat Management Area. A DDCT was conducted in conformance with the Worland RMP. The project area currently exceeds the 5% disturbance; however the size of the project would not contribute to significant impacts on critical habitat for sage-grouse and would provide data necessary to provide protections for this habitat in the future.
	X	Lands/Access	No uncertain or unique environmental effects are associated with the proposed action.
	X	Travel Management	No highly uncertain and potentially significant environmental effects or involve unique or unknown environmental risks regarding Travel Management.
		sh a precedent for future act environmental effects?	ction or represent a decision in principal about future actions with potentially
	No		Rationale:
105	X	Vegetation	The proposed action is not unusual or precedent-setting with regard to vegetation resources.
	X	Soils	The proposed action is not unusual or precedent-setting with regard to soils resources.
	X	Hydrology	The proposed action is not unusual or precedent-setting with regard to hydrologic resources.
	X	Recreation	The proposed action is not unusual or precedent-setting in regards to recreation resources.
	X	Visual Resources	The proposed action is not unusual or precedent-setting in regards to visual resources.
	X	Wildlife	The proposed project is not unusual or precedent-setting with regard to wildlife resources.
	X	Lands/Access	The proposed action does not set a precedent for future lands actions.
	X	Travel Management	The proposed action would not precedent for future action or represent a decision in principal about future actions with potentially significant environmental effects regarding Travel Management.
		a direct relationship to othe ental effects?	r actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant
Yes	No	Resource	Rationale
	X	Vegetation	The proposed action does not appear to link to any past, present, or future actions that would have a cumulative effect on vegetative resources.
	X	Soils	The proposed action does not appear to link to any past, present, or future actions that would have a cumulative effect on soils resources.
	X	Hydrology	The proposed action does not appear to link to any past, present, or future actions that would have a cumulative effect on hydrologic resources.
	X	Recreation	The proposed action does not appear to link to any past, present, or future actions that would have a cumulative effect on recreation resources.
	X	Visual Resources	The proposed action does not appear to link to any past, present, or future actions that would have a cumulative effect on visual resources.
	X	Wildlife	The proposed project is within sage-grouse Priority Habitat Management Area. A DDCT was conducted in conformance with the Worland RMP. The project area currently exceeds the 5% disturbance; however the size of the project would not contribute to significant impacts on critical habitat for sage-grouse and would provide data necessary to provide protections for this habitat in the future.
	X	Lands/Access	No concerns of cumulative impacts with this project.
	X	Travel Management	Proposed action would not have a direct relationship to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant environmental effects regarding Travel Management.

Extr	aord	inary Circumstances		
		e proposed project		
			s listed, or eligible for listing, on the National Register of Historic Places as	
		d by the bureau?	3, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1,	
		Rationale		
	X	Class III inventory for cultura	ll resources was completed (BLM cultural project #010-2015-105). No	
			fied. Consultation occurred with SHPO per the Wyoming State Protocol	
		Agreement between the BLM	and the SHPO. No significant impacts are expected.	
			sted, or proposed to be listed, on the List of Endangered or Threatened	
_		<u> </u>	esignated Critical Habitat for these species?	
Yes	No	Resource	Rationale	
	X	Wildlife	No significant impacts to any wildlife species is anticipated in association with this proposed project. The proposed project is within sage-grouse Priority Habitat Management Area. A DDCT was conducted in conformance with the Worland RMP. The project area currently exceeds the 5% disturbance; however the size of the project would not contribute to significant impacts on critical habitat for sage-grouse and would provide data necessary to provide protections for this habitat in the future.	
	X	Plants	There are no Endangered or Threatened or BLM sensitive plant species known to occur in the project area	
9. V			or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment?	
Yes	No	Resource	Rationale	
	X	Vegetation	None	
	X	Soils	None	
	X	Hydrology		
	X	Recreation	None	
	X	Visual Resources	None	
	X	Wildlife	No violations of any laws regarding wildlife resources are known to exist.	
	X	Lands/Access	No Lands laws or regulations will be violated by the proposed action.	
	X	Travel Management	Proposed action would not violate a Federal law, or a State, local or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment regarding Travel Management.	
1289	98)?	a disproportionately high and a	adverse effect on low income or minority populations (Executive Order	
Yes		Rationale		
	X	The project would not impact low income or minority populations.		
			f Indian sacred sites on Federal lands by Indian religious practitioners or	
			l integrity of such sacred sites (Executive Order 13007)?	
Yes		Rationale		
	X		f interest, based on previous tribal consultation, were identified.	
knov	vn to	occur in the area or actions tha	nued existence, or spread of noxious weeds or non-native invasive species t may promote the introduction, growth, or expansion of the range of such	
•			Act and Executive Order 13112)?	
Yes	No			
	X	invasive weeds known to occ	ute to the introduction, continued existence, or spread of noxious or ur in the area.	